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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, SA

SUBJ: DOMESTIC COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE FOR SAUDI ARABIA

REF: (A) JIDDA 1063; (B) JIDDA 506

1. SUMMARY: USG BRIEFING OF SAUDI JOINT COMMISSION DELEGATION ON DOMESTIC SATELLITE SCHEDULED FOR MORNING OF FEBRUARY 28 AFTER COMPLETION OF PLENARY SESSIONS. HOPE SCHEDULES OF DELEGATION MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY ABA AL-KHAIR AND SOLAIM, WILL PERMIT ATTENDANCE. CONCERNED AGENCIES WILL DRAW ON SAUDI REACTIONS IN PLANNING (WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN UNDERWAY) FOR BUSINESS TEAM VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA TO BRIEF OMAR FAQIEH.

2. OFFICIALS OF COMMERCE'S OFFICE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS (OT) PREPARING BRIEFING ALONG LINES SUGGESTED PARA 5 REF (A), INCLUDING CAPABILITIES OF U.S. FIRMS. OT SECURING
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INPUTS FROM NASA, CSAT, AND PRIVATE FIRMS TO ASSURE

COMPLETE AND EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION. CONSIDERING RANGE OF ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN SHORT TIME SPAN OF-PLENARY SESSIONS, IT CONSIDERED IMPRACTICAL TRY SQUEEZE BRIEFING INTO THESE SESSIONS EXCEPT FOR BRIEF REFERENCE TO IT.

ACCORDINGLY, HAVE SCHEDULED IT FOR 10:00 A.M. FEBRUARY 28 AT COMMERCE DEPARTMENT. ASSUME EMBASSY WILL INFORM DELEGATION PRIOR ITS DEPARTURE SO SCHEDULES CAN BE ARRANGED FOR AT LEAST KEY OFFICIALS TO ATTEND. WE HOPING THAT LOCATION AND TIMING OF BRIEFING TO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW SCHEDULED MEETING OF SECRETARY DENT WITH ABA-AL-KHAIR WILL PERMIT LATTER TO FIT BRIEFING INTO HIS TIGHT SCHEDULE.

3. PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF REF (A), CONCERNED WASHINGTON AGENCIES HAD MET TO CONSIDER SUGGESTION REF (B) FOR BUSINESS BRIEFING OF OMAR FAQIEH ON DOMESTIC SATELLITE. CONCUR THAT SUCH BRIEFING IN SAUDI ARABIA IS DESIRABLE AND REQUEST EMBASSY REACTION TO PROPOSAL WHICH FOLLOWS. WE PREPARED MOUNT SUCH EFFORT AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE IF EMBASSY CONCURS.

4. CONCENSUS HERE IS THAT SINCE NO SINGLE FIRM HAS STAKED OUT PROPRIETARY INTEREST IN SAUDI DOMESTIC SATELLITE, IT INAPPROPRIATE OFFER THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HUGHES ALONE AS SUGGESTED REFS AND THAT OPPORTUNITY SHOULD BE OPEN TO BROADER SEGMENT OF U.S. INDUSTRY.

5. THERE MANY U.S. FIRMS WHICH CAPABILITY FOR PORTIONS OF COMPLETE SATELLITE SYSTEM, E.G., SYSTEMS ARCHITECTURE OR GROUND STATIONS. TO INCLUDE ALL WOULD PRODUCE UNWIELDY GROUP. WE WOULD PROPOSE, THEREFORE, TO LIMIT THIS MISSION TO REPS OF FIRMS WITH SATELLITE CAPABILITY, ALL OF WHICH WOULD BE ABLE COMBINE FOR OTHER NEEDED COMPONENTS OF COMPLETE SATELLITE SYSTEM. EXPECT THIS WOULD LIMIT TO FIVE FIRMS OR POSSIBLY LESS. MISSION WOULD BE LED BY USG OFFICIAL KNOWLEDGEABLE IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND POSSIBLY ALSO AN OUTSIDE, NON-PROPRIETARY EXPERT SPECIFICALLY QUALIFIED IN SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS.

6. WE PROPOSE STAGE IT AS NON-PROPRIETARY, USG-LED MISSION IN NATURE OF TECHNICAL SEMINAR (AND FACT-FINDING MISSION) TO BRIEF SAG ALONG LINES PARA 6 REF (B)--I.E., WHAT A DOMESTIC SATELLITE SYSTEM COULD DO FOR SAUDI ARABIA, TIME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRAME FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT, AND PHASE-IN OF SATELLITE WITH BACKBONE AND OTHER MICROWAVE INSTALLATIONS. MEMBERS WOULD BE FREE PURSUE PROPRIETARY INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF OFFICIAL PROGRAM. HOPEFULLY END RESULT WOULD BE SAG INVITATION TO U.S. FIRMS OR CONSORTIA TO PROPOSE ON DOMESTIC SATELLITE. WOULD ALSO HOPE THAT IT WOULD HELP LAY GROUNDWORK FOR BROADER USG SUPPORTED EFFORT TO INVOLVE US BUSINESS IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA. MISSION

WOULD BE CAGNE SUPPORTED EFFORT IN ORDER PROVIDE MEANS FOR INCLUDING USG OR OTHER TECHNICAL EXPERT AS TEAM LEADER. EMBASSY WOULD BE EXPECTED ARRANGE PROGRAM WITH SAG, BUT OTHER ELEMENTS OF USUAL CAGNE EVENTS CONSIDERED UN-NECESSARY IN THIS INSTANCE.

7. CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN IMPORTANT POINTS WOULD BE HELPFUL IN USG APPROACHES TO INDUSTRY:

A. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER STATEMENT PARA 8 REF (B) QUOTE

UNDER NO CONDITIONS WOULD THEY REFUSE TO JOIN ALL-ARAB SATELLITE UNQUOTE IS STATEMENT EMANATING FROM SAG OR EMBASSY'S READING OF SAG INTENT. BELIEVE A FIRM STATEMENT OF SAG INTENT RE ALL-ARAB SATELLITE WOULD BE USEFUL FOR FIRMS TO PROPERLY DEVELOP PRESENTATIONS.

B. FEEL THAT APPROACH TO SAG WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE IF TAILORED TO TOTAL SAUDI NEEDS. WOULD SAG CONCUR WITH ADL BRIEFING MISSION ON GENERAL OUTLINES OF EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES AND PLANNED FACILITIES? ASSUME SAG WOULD NOT AGREE TO FIRMS SEEING ADL REPORT. TEAM WOULD ALSO BENEFIT FROM KNOWING IN ADVANCE EXTENT OF CAPABILITY THAT ALL-ARAB SATELLITE MIGHT PROVIDE FOR SAUDI ARABIA, AND THUS THE EXPECTATIONS FOR DOMESTIC SATELLITE, IN ORDER TO TAILOR PRESENTATIONS TO SAUDI REQUIREMENTS. IF HUGHES PARTICIPATES IN MISSION, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE GET INFORMATION FROM THAT SOURCE. IF THIS NOT POSSIBLE, WHAT ARE PROSPECTS OF SAG PROVIDING SUCH INFORMATION.

C. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE IT USEFUL HAVE EVIDENCE OF BROAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAG INTEREST IN SATELLITE--I.E., IN ADDITION TO MIN COMMUNICATIONS, OTHER SAG AGENCIES WITH COMMUNICATIONS INTERESTS SUCH AS MININFO., MODA, AND CPO.

RECOGNIZE EMBASSY MAY WISH DEFER PURSUIT OF ABOVE POINTS UNTIL JOINT COMMISSION DELEGATION HAS RETURNED TO SAUDI ARABIA WITH REACTIONS TO WASHINGTON BRIEFING. ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT OUTCOME OF BRIEFING MAY HAVE EFFECT ON PLANNING FOR MISSION TO SAUDI ARABIA.

8. FOR PURPOSES WASHINGTON BRIEFING, IT UNFORTUNATE THAT MIN COMMUNICATIONS NOT REPRESENTED ON SAUDI DELEGATION. ASSUMING FAQIEH WILL BE NOTIFIED THAT BRIEFING TO TAKE PLACE AND THAT ABSENCE OF MIN COMMUNICATIONS REP WILL NOT PRODUCE JURISDICTIONAL PROBLEMS WITHIN SAG. KISSINGER

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